



Testimony in Support of HB-6355, An Act Concerning Risk Protection Orders

Senator Winfield, Representative Stafstrom, ranking members Kissel and Fishbein and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee:

I live in West Hartford, CT and I am a supporter of CT Against Gun Violence. I am also a licensed psychologist in Connecticut.

I am proud that Connecticut has an Extreme Risk Protection Order. I know well that often someone who is considering suicide can feel differently the next day. The problem with having access to lethal means, like a firearm, is that often that next day never comes. When someone I am working with is experiencing suicidal thoughts I always ask if they have any firearms in the home and am grateful that so far, none of my clients have ever used one on themselves. But I know that that day can come at any time.

While recent research has suggested that Connecticut's law has reduced suicide rates by 14% (Kavisto & Phalen, 2018), other research suggests that more needs to be done (Swanson, 2019). For certain, access to lethal means, such as firearms, has been shown to dramatically increase the likelihood of a completed suicide (Studdert et al., 2020). This is especially true in instances where the person is likely to have reduced judgment or increased impulsive behavior, such as someone who has experienced trauma (e.g., Teasdale & Engert, 2001).

It is time to strengthen the law so that more gun deaths can be prevented. In particular, when the protection order expires, it should be a requirement that the subject is no longer at risk of violence before the firearms are returned.

Allowing family members to petition the court directly, as 12 other states do, provides an alternative means of initiating the process for people who are reluctant to involve law enforcement at the outset, because they fear law enforcement or are concerned about stigmatizing the gun owner as a criminal.

I ask that you favorably report HB-6355 out of committee so that the General Assembly can vote to strengthen our Extreme Risk Protection law so that it works harder to prevent firearm suicide.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Sarah A. Raskin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sarah A. Raskin, PhD, ABPP/ABCN
Charles. A. Dana Professor of Psychology and Neuroscience